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How to Win.

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Standard literature on Industrial Unionism

Why Strikes are Lost- How to Win

BY

W. E. TRAUTMANN

NEW YORK

Industrial Literature Bureau

1909

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WHY STRIKES ARE LOST. HOW TO WIN.

By W. E. Trautmann.

Why strikes are lost.

After a tremendous outbreak of an epidemy of strikes, only a few years ago, there seems to be at present a relapse all around, a relapse, not only so far as the numerical growth of alleged labor organizations are concerned, but more a relapse in the militant and rebellious spirit of the workers. A spirit that manifested itself then in crude expressions and actions, which, however, seemed to be a foreboding of a general awakening. Here and there one can again hear of small eruptions of pent-up discontent, as if denoting the last flicker of light before it goes out altogether. If occasionally larger bodies of workers become involved in these demonstrations of revolt, politicians and labor (mis)leaders are quickly on hand to suggest termination of the conflict with the promise of speedy arbitration. But seldom is anything more heard of the results of such conciliatory tactics, or of any determined stand on the part of the workers to enforce the terms of such settlements. Their power, once crushed after having been exercised with the most ef-

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fective precision, their confidence vanishes and also the organization through which they were able to rally the forces of their fellow workers for concerted moves and action.

After an apparent awakening of three to four years duration (1901 to 1905), during wich some of the largest conflicts were fought out on American soil, a general indifference superceded the previous activity. A lethargy prevails even to the extent that many workers with eyes still shut are marching into the pitfalls laid for them. Blindfolded they are to be prevented from coming together into organizations through which the workers would be able to profit from the lessons of the past, and prepare for the conflicts with the capitalist class with better knowledge of facts and more thoroughly equipped to give them better battle.

In the period mentioned the general clamor for an advance in wages, the shortening of the hours of labor, had to find its expression. The prices of the necessities of life had been soaring up, as a rule, before the workers instinctively felt that they, too, had to make efforts to overcome the increased poverty concomittant with the increased prices for the commodities needed for existence. Powerless as individuals, as they well conceived,

they were inclined to come together for more collective and concerted action. In great displays, the beauties and the achievements of such collective action on craft union lines, as exemplified by the American Federation of Labor and the eight independent National Brotherhoods of Railway Workers, were presented to them.

Not knowing better, seeing before their eyes immediate improvement of their conditions, or at least a chance to advance the price of their labor power in proportion to the increased cost of the necessaries of life, they flocked into the trade unions in large numbers. At the same time the relative scarcity of available workers in the open market, at a period of relative good prosperity, forced the employers of labor to forstall any effort to cripple production. Consequently in the epidemic of strikes following each other, the workers gained concessions, but such concessions were as much the combined result of a decreased supply of labor to an increasing demand, as to the spontaneously developed onrush into the trade unions.

One thing, also, contributed largely to the success of these quickly developed strikes. The workers would come together shortly before walking out of the shops. In the primary stage of organization thus

formed they knew nothing of craft distinctions, and unaware of what later would be used as a barrier against staying together, they would usually strike in a body to win in most cases. But anxious to preserve the instrument by which alone they could obtain any results, they found in most of the cases that certain rules were laid down by a few wise men in bygone years, by which they were to govern the organizations and admit, or reject from membership any one who did not strictly fit into the measure, or "Craft Autonomy."

What is Craft Autonomy?

It's a term used to lay down restrictive rules of each organization wich adheres to the policy of allowing only a certain portion of workers in a given industry to become members of a given trade union. Formally as a rule, a craft was determined by the tool which a group of workers used in the manufacturing process. But as the simple tool of yore gave way to the large machine, or machines, the distinction was changed to designate the part of a manufacturing process on a given article, by a part of the workers engaged in the making of the same.

For instance, in the building of a machine the following crafts designated, as performing certain functions, namely:

The workers preparing the pattern—pattern makers;

The workers making cores—Core makers;

The workers making moulds and casting—Moulders;

The helpers working in the foundry—Foundry helpers;

The workers preparing and finishing the parts of machines—Machinists;

The workers assembling the parts of machines—Assemblers;

The workers polishing machines—Metal polishers.

This line of demarkation could thus be drawn in almost every industry.

Now these various crafts, each contributing its share in the production of an article, are not linked together in one body, although members of these crafts work in one plant or industry.

They are seperated in craft groups. Each craft union zealously guards its own craft interests. The rule is strictly adhered to that even if the protection of the interests of a craft organization is detrimental to the general interests of all others. No interference is countenanced. This doctrine of non-interference in the affairs of a craft union is what is called "craft or trade autonomy."

How craft autonomy works.

Now as observed in the beginning, a body of workers, only shortly brought together may walk out on strike, before they ever learned to know what craft autonomy implies. They usually win in such cases. As soon as they begin to settle down to do some constructive or educational work, so to keep the members interested in the affairs of the organization, and prepare eventually for future conflicts with the employers, they learn to their chagrin that they have done wrong in allowing all to be together.

They are told that they had no right to organize all working at one place into one organization. The splitting-up process is enforced, trade autonomy rules are applied, and what once a united body of workers without knowledge of the intricate meaning of "autonomy laws" is finally divided into a number of craft organizations.

The result is that no concerted action is assured in the conflicts following. Many a time the achievements of one strike or conflict, won only because the workers stood and fought together, are lost in the next skirmish, when one portion of workers, members of one craft union, remain at work, while others, members of another trade organization, are fighting for either improved working condition, or in re-

sistance against wrongs or injustice done them by the employing class.

Take, for example, the first street car workers' strike in San Francisco, Cal., in the first year of Mayor Schmidt's administration. Not only were all motormen, conductors and ticket agents organized in one union, but the barnmen, the linemen and repairers, and many of the repair shop workers enlisted in the union, also the engineers, the firemen, the electricians, the ash wheelers, oilers, etc., in the power stations. They all fought together. The strike ended with a signal victory for the workers; this was the result because the workers had quit their work spontaneously. But hardly had the workers settled down to arrange matters for the future, and to make the organization still stronger, when they found themselves confronted with the clamor of "craft autonomy rules."

They were told that the electricians in the power houses, linemen and line repairers had to be members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The workers heard to their amazement that the engineers had to be members of the International Union of Steam Engineers.

The firemen, ashwheelers and oilers were commanded to withdraw at once from the Street Car Employees Union,

and join the union of their craft. The workers in the repair shops were not permitted under trade autonomy rules to form a union embracing all engaged therein. They had to join the union of their craft, either as machinists, moulders, polishers or woodworkers, and would not be permitted to be members of any other organization. **They were restrained by the rules of craft autonomy from being members of a union embracing all in the industry, even if they had chosen to remain members by their own free choice. They were not allowed to think that their place would be in such an organization through which the best results with the least of sacrifices for the workers could be obtained.**

In the second strike of street car workers in 1907 the absolute failure, the complete disaster, was solely due to the fact that the workers, separated in several craft groups, could not strike together and win together. Like, or similar cases, by the hundreds, could be enumerated to show what grave injuries to the workers craft autonomy works. And when the deep investigator will follow in the investigation of facts and underlying causes, he will be surprised to see how the employers of labor took advantage of this dividing-up policy. He will see how the capitalist helped gleefully to pit

one portion of workers against others in the same or other industries, so that the latter, while kept busy fighting among themselves, had no time, nor could they gather strength to direct their fights against the employers and exploiters.

The Sacredness of Contracts.

Perhaps the workers, (although compelled in most of the cases to adhere to the outline plan of organizing in craft unions), would have made common cause with other crafts in anyone industry in their conflicts with the capitalists, if they had realized that the defeat of one ultimately meant the defeat of all.

But with the separation from other groups of workers a craft or sectarian spirit was developed among members of each of the trades organizations that manifested itself, and does so now, in their relations to other groups of workers as well as to the employers of labor. "Gains at any price" even at the expense of others,—has become the governing forces. The rule of "non-interference" made sacred by the decrees of those who blatantly pose as leaders of labor, permitted one craft union to ride rough shod over the others. Let us go ahead, the devil take the hindmost" has drowned the old idea of the "injury to one is the concern of all."

A great victory is proclaimed in print

and public when one or the other of such craft organizations succeed in getting a contract signed with an individual employer, or what is considered still better, if it is consummated with an association of employers in a given industry. But actuated by that sectarian spirit these contracts are considered to be inviolable, not so much by the employers who will break them any time when it will be to their advantage, but by the workers who are organized in craft unions. Embued with their sectarian ideas, thus by the terms of such a contract they are in duty bound to protect the interests of the employers if they should have controversies with other workers, the workers consent to being made traitors to their class.

Small wonder, therefore, that in that period between 1901 and 1905, the time that these lessons and conclusions are drawn from, the employers were able to check first, then to retard, and finally to paralize the workers in securing, by their organized efforts permanently improved conditions in their places of employment. The employers, supported by such lieutenants of labor, as Gompers, Mitchell, Duncan and others (as they were rightly called by Marcus Aurelius Hanna when he organized the Hanna-chist Civic Federation), would harp continually on the sanctity of contracts with some of the

craft unions, while at the same time slaughtering piece-meal other craft unions with whom they were in conflict.

Of the thousands and odds of strikes that took place in that period and thenceafter, none bears better testimony of the impotency of the craft unions, not one has presented better proof of the shameless betrayal of working class interests than the gigantic strike of workers in the meat packing and slaughter houses in Chicago, Omaha and other places in the country.

The meat wagon drivers of Chicago were organized in 1902. They made demands for better pay and shorter hours. Unchecked by any outside influence they walked out on strike. They had the support of all other workers in the packing houses. They won. But before they resumed work the big packing firms insisted that they enter into a contract. They did. In that contract the teamsters agreed not to enter into any sympathetic strike with other employees in the plants or stock yards. Not only this, but the drivers also decided to split their union up in three. They then had the "Shaving teamsters," the "Packing house teamsters," and the "Meat delivery drivers."

Encouraged by the victory of the teamsters, the other workers in the packing houses then started to organize. But they

were carefully advised not to organize into one body, or at the best into one National Trades Union. They had to be divided-up, so that the employers could exterminate them all when ever opportunity presented itself.

Now observe how the dividing-up process worked. The teamsters were members of the "International Union of Teamsters." The engineers were connected with the "International Union of Steam Engineers." The firemen, oilers, ash-wheelers were organized in the "Brotherhood of Stationary Firemen." Carpenters employed in the stock yards permanently had to join the "Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners." The pipe and steam fitters were members of another "National Union." The sausage makers, the packers, the canning department workers, the beef butchers, the cattle butchers, the hog butchers, the bone shavers, etc., each craft-group had a seperate union. Each union had different rules, all of them cautiously guarding their alleged rights, not permitting any infringements on them by others. Many of the unions had contracts with the employers. These contracts expired at different dates. Most of the contracts contained the clause of "no support to others when engaged in a controversy with the stock yard companies."

The directory of unions of Chicago shows in 1903 a total of 56 different unions in the packing houses, divided up still more in 14 different National Trades Union of the American Federation of Labor. Imagine what an army of generals, and every one of them with conflicting plans and interests.

What a horrible example of such an army divided in itself. This was best displayed in the last desperate and pitiful struggle of the stock yard laborers against the announced wage reduction from 17 to 16 cents an hour in 1904.

They who have so often helped others when called upon, could have reasonably expected the support at least of those who were working with them in the same industry.

Nor would their expectations failed of realization, if the other workers had been given a free hand.

No wage worker, if he has any manhood in him, likes to be strikebreaker by his own free will. That there are thousands of strikebreakers in America is due to the discriminative rules of the American Federation of Labor unions. Due also to the high initiation fees, as high as $500. But the history of strikes prove that where no restrictive measures are enforced, the workers in one plant instinctively make common cause, in

every conflict with their employers.

Not so when the lash of a sacred contract is held over their head. The breaking of a contract in most of the cases means suspension from the union. It means that the union agrees to fill the places of men or women who suspend work in violation of contracts. This is so stipulated in most of the agreements with the employers. In more than one case labor leaders have helped the employers to fill the places of the rebellious workers.*

Now in that strike of butcher workmen in the stock yards they looked to the engineers, the firemen and others to quit their jobs. They expected the teamsters to walk out in their support as the latter themselves had gained their demands only by the support of all. And really all the members of these craft unions were prepared and ready to lay down their tools. The strike would have been won within 24 hours if all would had stood together. The employers realized that. They sent for their lieutenants of labor. Over 25 labor leaders conjointly helped to force the workers back to their stations. Drivers already walking out were told to return or their places would be filled by other union men. The engineers were commanded to abide by their contract with the com-

* Read "Crimes of the Labor Leaders," by the same author.

panies. Union printers, memebrs of the Typographical Union, employed in the printing plants of the stock yards, were escorted every day through the picket lines of the poor strikers. These aristocrats of labor even looked down with contempt on the men and women whom an illfate compelled to be slaves of the magnates of "Packingtown." All the appeals to the manhood of these union-strikebreakers was in vain. Stronger than their sense for duty and for solidarity in the struggle of members of their own class, was the "iron gag and chain of craft-union-law of non-interference." **The contracts** were the weapons in the hands of the capitalists, by which the craft unionists were forced to wear the brandmark of strikebreakers. They were made union-scabs in the hours when concerted action would have pulled down the flag of boastful defiant triumph from the palaces of the bosses, and would have raised up the banner of working class victory on the miserable pesthouses in which men and women and children are compelled to drudge for mere existence. Yes, these were the weapons used by the meat barons of America to ultimately extinguish all unions of workers in their employ.

Not the capitalists could defeat the workers, not they! The craft unionists, forced by the lieutenants of the employ-

ing class, (because they are indirectly their servants), defeated themselves. They shattered not only their own hopes, but the hopes, the confidence, the aspirations of thousands and tens of thousands, who had thought after all, that unionism meant: Solidarity, Unity, Brotherly Support in Hours of Strike and Struggle."

This is how they lost! Not only in Packingtown, but in almost every industrial place of production in that period referred to. That was the way the employers did, and still do, rally their forces in their successful efforts to defeat labor. By slashing piece-meal the Giant, tied hand and foot by a paper contract, they throttled him, threw his members out of joint, so that his enormous strength could not be used against his oppressors. Oh, but they would not kill him, oh no! He who is so useful to them to create everything so that they who do nothing may abound in luxury and debauchery. He must only be kept within his cage, his dungeon where he drudges with the sweat of his brow, bent over in blunt indifference, carrying stupidly his burden, the weight of a world that depends on him for its existence. Believing that he is eternally condemned to be a slave he perishes and falls by the wayside when his usefulness for the master class ceases.

Craft unionism, the American Federa-

tion of Labor, has made him the pathetic wage slave, always contented to be no more than a wage slave and so its offspring (John Mitchell's Organized Labor), with no higher ideals and sublime hopes for a better life on earth.

In the curses and vows of condemnation, intermingled with the outcries of despair when the burdens become too heavy, one can hear not so much hatred expressed against those and their class (who Shyllock-like only ask and take their good pound of flesh), as against the vampires who suck the lifeblood of the workers, destroy their hopes and energies, stultify their manhood, and who live and dwell in debaucheries akin to the masters', whose pliant dirty tools they are, and who, more than anything else, are responsible that the workers loose their battles and their fights for a higher station in life.

They, whether their names be Gompers, Mitchell, Duncan, Tobin, Golden Grant Hamilton, or what else, are the vultures, because they exist only by dividing they workers and separating one from another. They have been and are doing the bidding of the master class. Upon them falls the awful curse of a world of millions. They who have made America the land of the lost strikes, the land where from the mountains and the

hills, and in the plains and vales resound the echoes of the curse of a millionfold outraged working class. They are those that the world should know as the traitors, the real malefactors, the real instigators of the apalling defeats and betrayals of the proletarians.

The land, where the depravity of the vultures threw thousands back into the stage of distrust, thousands who lost, because they confided and trusted to others and did not know what they were coming together for, were confiding only to be defeated.—To be lost, to be abandoned in the desert (where there is no escape from the meeted punishment), by those who destroy the workers so that they can continue their debaucheries at the expense of the working class. That land America, has given the greatest lesson to the workers of the Universe. Let it be hoped that all will profit, all will learn and will put forth their efforts to redeem the workers and prepare them for their mission, for the real struggle, for their industrial freedom, the only freedom worth fighting for.

Why they lost, you now know,—how they will, yea, **must** win, learn that too, and then gird your loins, help to undo, help to reconstruct, help to win!

HOW STRIKES WILL BE WON.

The capitalists could not defeat the workers, not they! The workers always defeated themselves by either their lack of unity, or because they had faith in the false theories, and thought it to be virtuous to scab upon each other under the name of craft unionism. They were and are told, and believed it too, that contracts with employers of labor are sacred instruments. This idea sprang again from the false premises that property rights of the employers are inviolable. Therefore the workers who bind themselves down by an agreement, by virtue of which they commit themselves to injure other fellow workers rather than be guilty of breach of contract with the employers, consider themselves parts of the property of the employers during the period contracted for and while engaged at work.

The paramount issue from to-day is, to remove the causes, to destroy false erroneous notions and ideas. To establish new premises and hence also new mediums for dealing with the problems of these times, so that as a logical result the workers will know how to strike and how to win, and how to govern their actions accordingly.

HOW UNITY WILL BE ESTABLISHED ON THE INDUSTRIAL FIELD.

Lack of unity being one of the causes of defeat, the idea suggests itself that the workers must look for a way unity can be established. In craft unions they are divided. Being divided in the place of production they are divided and in each other's hair in all other places.

But even if they were united on other fields, political and otherwise, the master class would simply smile so long as they see them disunited in the factories and the mills.

All wealth flows from the process of production. Production is carried on for the profit of the few. The means of production and distribution, viz. the factories, mills, mines, railroads, etc., are ever being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. They form a class of their own composed of those who are the owners of the means of life needed by millions who work for them for mere wages. They have at their command, in the protection of their interests as owners of the industrial resources, all other institutions, viz. schools and colleges, ecclesiastical institutions, the government and all its agencies. But after all it is their united interests as owners of the land, mines, factories, mills and means of

transportation that forces the other institutions into their service.

The workers (without whose labor these resources of wealth would have no value for their owners), have also interests in common, in the same place where the capitalists have interests that bind them together. But the interests of the workers are opposed to those of the owners. The workers continually strive to get a larger control of the product of their labor in these places of production, be it in the shape of higher wages, shorter hours of work, more sanitary conditions or protective measures against dangers to limb and life. But the success or failure of their efforts depends on the strength of the combination of interests of the workers. Just so as the increase in power and concentration on the side of the capitalists depends on the combination of their mutual interests in every station of life, so does the interests of the workers depend **on the power of organization.**

In the craft divided unions of the American Federation of Labor there is no power. Therefore observe the constant defeats or what is worse, compromises, by virtue of which the capitalists allow a small proportion of mechanics to have a union so to prevent the larger masses from getting together. The workers, however, are impelled, to combine their in-

dustrial interests as a class if ever they wish to win their battles, the same as the capitalists have their combinations to further their class interests and to defeat the workers. The workers' interests will be best protected by combinations on industrial lines. That means that the workers of one given plant, or industry, come and stay together in one organization embracing them all, all working under one rule, and all combined for mutual self-help. On one side as employer an individual, a corporation, or even a trust, on the other side will be one union of workers in one plant, or in all plants of that one corporation. The builders of machines, for instance, will not be divided in ten different groups. They all will form the industrial union of machine builders. All the unions of machine builders will form a part of an organization constituted of workers in the divers plants and factories where wage earners work in metal and machinery articles. And as the workers in other industries organize also on the same lines they all form the combination of workers for the protection of their interests as a class. A combination which will develop the power by which the workers will be able to win their fights for more control in the places where they work, and finally for the complete control of the huge instruments of

production and distribution.

NO MORE CRAFT UNION SCABBERY AND TREASON.

Thus united, and "craft union" form eliminated, the workers will have no reason to produce the scab or strike-breaker, nor will anyone have a cause to become a strikebreaker himself. The shield of craft unionism, held to-day in defense by those who remain, as union men, at work while others in the same factory and mills are out on strike, will be shattered to pieces. The stigma of an outcast from the class of workers will fall on him, who in spite of the appeal of his struggling fellow workers, prefers to be faithful to the master class. To-day the coward and traitor often protects himself by referring to his allegiance to the union of his craft and its rules. When industrially organized the workers will owe but one obligation, and that is to the class of millions who are of their own flesh and blood, because they are partners in want and distress.

One union for all,—and once a union man, always a union man. Because craft unions charge arbitrary initiation fees, some of them, as the green bottle blowers, $500.00 (five hundred dollars), and others

from $50.00 to $200.00, it follows that men and women who have not the means are debarred, and driven to become strike-breakers. In the craft unions, if a man looses his job and finds employment in another industry, and wants to be a union member, he is charged another initiation fee. Some workers have to carry cards of four and five unions in their pocket and pay dues to as many. Do you wonder that the strikebreakers are breeded out of such conditions, rendered so because of the barriers that are erected against the invasion of territories that the craft unionists think is their exclusive domain.

In an industrial union unity will be established throughout the universe. Once a member of a labor organization a man or woman may change occupation and yet immediately step into the union of workers comprised of those who are engaged in that other industry. That is unionism that unites, unionism that in reality means: "Unity, solidarity, standing together, brotherly support in hours of strife and struggle!"

NO SACRED CONTRACTS.

Power alone does talk. When employers of labor insisted and succeeded in having the clauses inserted in most of the wage contracts of craft unions: "That no strike be called during the life of the contract,

nor sympathetic walk-outs in support of others tolerated by the union," their object was to divide the workers. Not only that, they also wanted a chance to prepare themselves after the termination of these time-contracts, so to defeat the workers if they would endeavor to get more concessions. By these time-contracts the employers annihilate even the little power there may be in a craft union.

The workers organized in industrial unions will not permit the crippling of their power by such contracts. Gains will be made in the control of shop conditions, and they will be able to hold all achievements by establishing the "closed shop" and the "open union."

Relations between the capitalist class and the working class are determined by the power that each is able to exercise in the pursuit of their antagonistic claims. As an illustration, power is generated in a steam boiler, power by which the machines of production are driven. On the intensity of the fire below the boiler does it depend whether high or low pressure is generated. When the pressure goes up too high, the safety-valve is there to release the pressure and prevent the boiler from blowing up. The regulation of fire is therefore the essential thing to keep steam and power at a desired pressure. Applied in the labor movement it works

the same way. The fire which generates the pressure is the working class' productivity and its discontent. If that discontent can be accumulated by the organization stirring the fire up, and be utilized, the pressure in the boiling pot of production will rise. When it reaches the point of danger the capitalist class, unable to kill the guard at the fire-door, that is the organization, is compelled to release the safety-valve by granting reforms and concessions, so to save themselves from being blown up with the exploding boiler of capitalist production.

Thus the power of discontent properly organized and judiciously applied will be the instrument by which the workers will make headway in their efforts, and will improve their working conditions without binding themselves by time-contracts to betray each other in the struggles.

Thus organized the workers will use all means that may be at their command in their battles for control. Strikes, irritation-strikes, passive resistance strikes, boycott, sabotage, political instruments, and general strikes in industrial plants, will all be the means applied with precision, and changed whenever conditions so dictate.

It's for victory that the workers are organizing, for immediate battle and for the final struggle.

THE FINAL STRUGGLE.

The workers, industrially organized, will become conscious of their power, and they will develop the faculties to operate the factories and mills, etc., through the agencies and instruments of their own creation.

Thus, discontent organized, and power thus generated, the time will arrive when the release of the safety-valve on the rattling boiler of capitalist production will not save it, nor can those escape who utilize the generating power of the working class to grind out the profits and the surplus wealth that they squander while the millions dwell in hovels, and struggle fiercely for the means of meager existence and life. The intense fire stirred up by the vigilant fireman, the industrial organization, will generate such a pressure that the old rusty boiler will not be able to withstand the immense power and pressure. With the explosion disappears the pressure of discontent. The fire and power of productivity alone remains. Through it and by it the workers will begin production for use. Then will begin the era when men and women will be industrially free and the world abliss with the great creations of a freed nation of the universe —the nation of toilers.

Industrial Unionism is the instrument

to be constructed for these purposes.

How you have lost, fellow workers, you have learned!

How you must win and can has been shown to you in these few lines.

What do you choose? Defeat or Victory?

If for victory and the triumph of your cause you look, organize that fire of discontent, generate that pressure, join the organization that proposes this programme based on scientific, on historic, on industrial facts in life.....be free by your own choice and action.

Such an organization is the Industrial Workers of the World.

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